CHAPTER II

ECONOMY

Compared to more technologically advanced societies, the Washo had little processing, storage, or transportation of goods. It was a "direct economy" in that the producing group consumed most of its own products. Distances between the point of distribution and the point of consumption were usually not great.

Economic demands seldom exceeded subsistence requirements so that even when natural supplies were abundant accumulated surpluses were small. Surpluses in pinenuts are an exception to this, but since pinenuts were difficult to store for more than one year or to tranport in profitable quantities, this surplus was set aside for subsistence and not trade. If one family had a surplus in pinenuts there was a tendency for all families to have such a surplus. Therefore these were largely non-tradeable surpluses.[1]

Supply was determined by the productivity of the natural environment and the amount and skill of the human labor used in production and distribution. The part of wealth devoted to acquiring new goods and the social forms involved in production, distribution, and consumption played a minor role in supply.

Pinenuts (tagum), acorns (malung), and other seeds were among the major staple foods. A variety of roots, berries, and leafy plants filled out the rest of the vegetable diet. Animal fats and protein were provided primarily by fish and small mammals, especially rabbits. With the exception of deer (m¢mdewi), the large mammals, such as antelope (ayas), mountain goat (ogul), and bear (taba) were not important in the diet. They were sought as much for their skins and the prestige of killing them as for their meat. Downs (1961, 381) writes "all informants emphasized that Indians shared food equally. Thus a statement made voluntarily that bear meat was not shared suggests different attitudes about bears." And there are suggestions that "the killing of a bear represented the ultimate in Washo bravery and the possession of the skin conferred extra powers on the owner." Birds, reptiles, and insects were also eaten. Several hundred species of plants and animals were known and used by the Washo. Merriam (n.d.) collected names for over 200 plants and animals. Numerous plants were used as medicines (Train, et al. 1941; Murphey 1959).

Water (dime) was carried and stored in deer intestine bags and basketry water-jars. With the numerous streams and springs in Washo territory no place

1. See pp. 57-58 for a discussion of pinenut surpluses.

is more than a few miles from running water. The importance of bathing in Washo ritual life made access to water particularly important. Springs were considered choice wintering sites because the water never froze over.

Material Culture

The following outline gives the main items of Washo material production. Almost all of these items have separate terms in the Washo language. Most of the terminology not included may be found in the vocabularies by Merriam (1904 and 1904-1935) and Kroeber (1907). The author's field data are supplemented here primarily by the works of Dangberg (1919) and Stewart (1941).

A. Housing and related items.
1. Winter house of poles, branches, sod, etc. in a conical form (galis dangal. Plate V, A illustrates a galis dangal.
2. Windbreak of branches in a half-dome form (gadu), Plate V, B.
3. Shade of various forms (ta?a).
4. Hunting and fishing blinds (ma?angal).
5. Meat drying scaffold (biali).
6. Bed (tada), seat (itkolanga), and mat (maba) of woven sagebrush bark.
7. Fireplace (diyu itgums¢w¢) and torch (ulu ushi).
8. Log footbridge (mogahat).
9. Log ladder (bakmanga).
10. Fish dam (imbeshuk).

B. Clothing and ornaments.
1. Blankets or robes of whole skins or woven from strips of rabbit skin (dayoliti and umbidu). (Plate IV, C).
2. Deer or antelope skin clothing.
   a. belt (melliu)
   b. breechclout (gumyoyabuwe)
   c. poncho (damu)
   d. skirt (tsilug¢l)
   e. dress (mangumtash)
   f. apron (imboshude)
   g. moccasins (moko)
   h. headband (ih¢pbey¢gul)
3. Leggings (p¢kishu wigas), woman's napkin, and baby diaper of sagebrush bark.
4. Hairnet of fiber cord (megodih¢p).
5. Round snowshoes (shumelli) with wood rim and bark or skin network.
6. Bracelet (m¢liuy¢k), necklace (uml¢suk), and ear pendant of bone, plant, or shell (madap) beads (makau).
7. Hafted and unhafted bone or stone drills.
8. Body paints of red (sawasan), yellow (waltsatsini), and white (dipek) in mineral pigments and charcoal for black (w¢lyauwi).
9. Feathers (tsisuapo), especially of magpie or eagle.
10. Scratching bone for tattoos.

1/1 [see end plate V, following p. 74 — Analyst]

custom to leave the house standing regardless of where the person dies, although the house may be temporarily abandoned and purified with smoke from sagebrush or juniper (Freed and Freed n.d.).

The galis dangal was the only house the Washo made that was used for more than a few months. A galis dangal may be made by a family and used by that family for several years, although they might only sleep in it in the winter. It would be used in the summer for storage or to sleep in on rainy nights. A gadu or ta?a were often built right next to a galis dangal for summer use.

During the beginning of pinenut gathering, if one had not already been built, the family would gradually bring in material for a galis dangal and build one. The construction itself would take most of the family's spare time from gathering and other necessary activities for about a week. Often neighbors would help. The house would be gradually improved and repaired for the length of it's use with certain features, such as a packed clay floor or a windbreak for the smoke hole, added perhaps years after its initial construction.

A spring was considered the most desirable location because the water there would not freeze over in the winter as a stream would. Another consideration for the location of a galis dangal was the location of one's pinenut picking grounds. The sunny side of a hill was also preferred.

There was a great amount of variation in the construction and materials used in the galis dangal; however, a few generalizations can be made. There was always a smoke hole in the center of the roof. The door always faced east, just as it does today in most old Washo houses. Bertha Holbrook, Hank Pete, Roy James, George Snooks, and Suzy Dick all think of the east entrance of their houses as the front door regardless of the fact that the road may be on the west side of the house. Roy James said that this was to avoid the strong wind from the west. One reason for this custom seems to be that Washo refer to the sun and to the east for orientation. The puberty ceremony is all oriented to the east.

The galis dangal was usually round and ranged in diameter from about ten to twenty feet, depending upon the number of occupants it was built for and the availability of long poles in the vicinity. Another factor that determined the size of the galis dangal was the practice of sleeping with the head toward the wall and the feet toward the fire. With the fireplace in a center pit (about three inches deep), with a ring of rocks under the smoke hole, and the difficulty of building a large house, the optimum size was about 12 to 15 feet in diameter.

The door opening (itpasua) was from 3 to 5 feet in height and from 2 to 3 feet in width. The door (iombisuk) was covered with an old rabbit skin.

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secure and prepare these (hooked pole, roasting of nuts, carrying baskets); mano and metate; twined basketry techniques and basket form (e.g., winnowing trays); temporary brush house; antelope hunting method by 'charming'; private ownership of clumps of piñon trees."

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Washo winter use of the highlands had been of research interest in recent years. In an archeological survey report Heizer and Elsasser (1953, 18) state that "permanent occupation at elevations over 5500 feet in prehistoric times would be hazardous or impossible." Continuing the project, Elsasser (1960, 26) considered 4000 ft. the approximate dividing line between summer and winter habitation for the California side, and he stated that "in aboriginal times . . . little or no land, even at the highest elevations was unknown to the Indians." From ethnographic evidence Freed (1954, 1) stated in reference to Lake Tahoe (6275 ft. elevation), that "if there was to be no pine nut crop, a family might choose to winter at the lake."

The Freed Survey of Lake Tahoe

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Freed (1954) conducted a survey of Washo habitation sites in the Lake Tahoe area by interrogation of Washo informants. The map accompanying the present paper gives the location of sites discussed and mapped by Freed. The sites are numbered 1 through 31, (see note 2 for further discussion of the map).

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Freed's site #6 is a deposit of red clay near the lake; #10 is at Rubicon Springs (the mineral water of which was used for internal disorders), which was on a trade route into central California; #16 is a cave at the foot of Stanford Rock where hunters sometimes stayed; #17 is a camp among oak trees; #27 (26-Do-1) is the cave at Cave Rock used for shelter; and #29, #30 and #31 were resting places rather than campsites. The rest of the sites were used primarily in connection with fishing, although hunting and gathering were additional considerations. Freed (1954) says:

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> "The Washo spent the summer months fishing in the streams around the lake, each family moving to another river whenever it saw fit but usually confining itself to a particular section of the lake's perimeter . . . the camps were usually in open spaces close to the lake shore. . . . A camp might consist of five or six circular windbreaks (gado), each housing a family.

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The Kings Beach complex type site, Pla-9, runs along the beach of the northern shore of Lake Tahoe in the vicinity of the towns of Kings Beach and Tahoe Vista.

Although Martis complex materials were not found stratigraphically below Kings Beach materials, the Martis complex was assigned a much earlier date. These authors suggest (1953, 21) that "the Martis Complex may have flourished some time in the first two millennia B. C." while the Kings Beach complex is equated with the historic Washo and "had a relatively shorter duration and perhaps 1000 A. D. is about all the age we can now assign to it."

The great time depth of Martis was assigned on the evidence of the use of basalt for flaked implements and the recovery of a boatstone (boat-shaped spear thrower weight) at the Martis type site. Since their report another boatstone has been found at Dangberg Hot Springs (Do-8) at a depth of 18 in. This hot spring was a favorite Washo campground, and has yielded a number of artifacts of both the Martis and Kings Beach complexes.

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Heizer and Elsasser (1953, 22) explain the lack of stratified sites in their highland survey as based on "a tendency for people to settle in a spot which has not before been used." Their evidence is mainly that the sites are in open areas and that local supernatural beliefs indicate a fear of previously occupied spots. This tendency clearly breaks down in the case of spring sites in the lowlands.

The following elements are listed for the two complexes:

Martis

"1. Basalt preferred material for chipped implements.
2. Obsidian and chert used very rarely.
3. Projectile points fairly large and heavy, roughly chipped, variable in form.
4. Mano and metate for seed-grinding.
5. Cylindrical pestle and bowl-mortar (?).
6. Boatstones (and atlatl ?).
7. Economic emphasis on hunting and seed using.
8. Basalt flake scrapers with pressure-retouched edge abundant.
9. Expanded-base finger-held flaked drills or punches common.